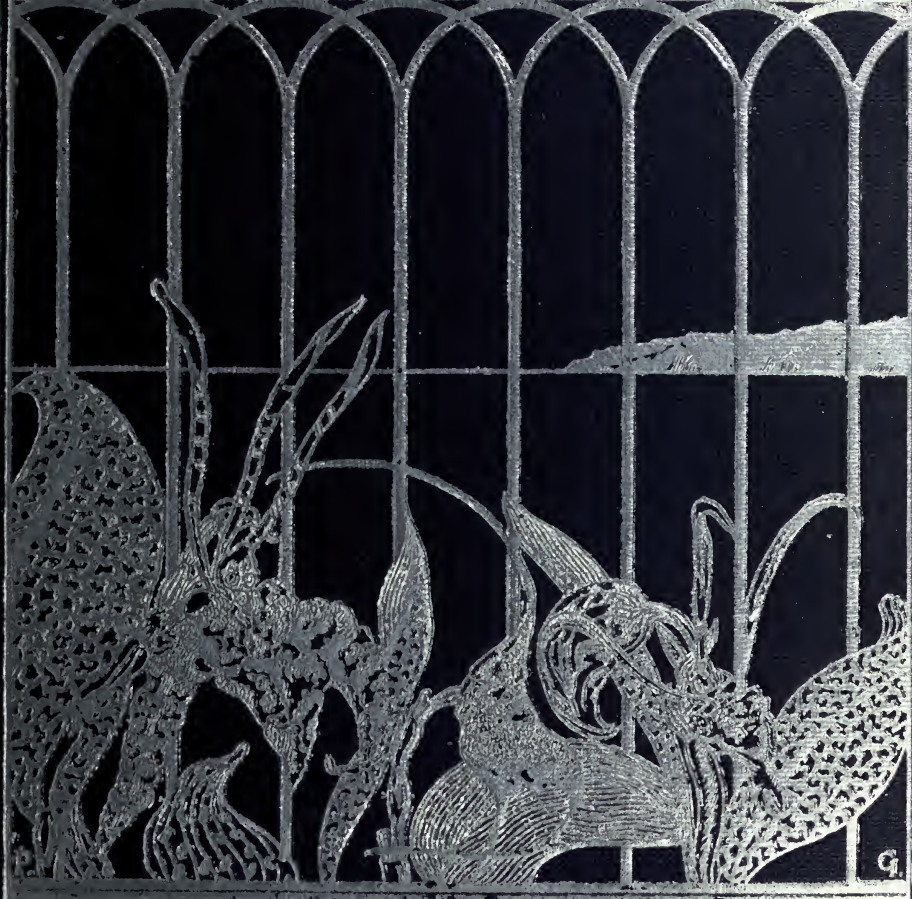
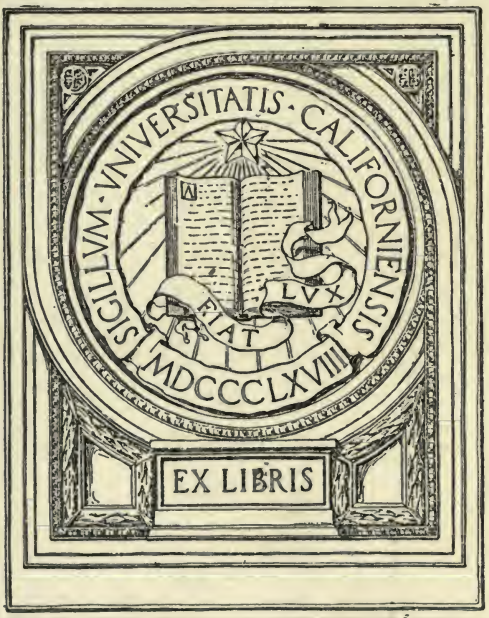
THE HOVSE OF ORCHIDS



GEORGE STERLING

GIFT OF
Ambrose Bierce



117
.5

Dear Master :

My third book — there'd probably have been not even a first, at least within covers, had it not been for you. I hope, and feel, that there will be a few things in here that will please you : were I a brighter pupil there would have been a thousand.

Affectionately,

George Sterling.

San Francisco, April 10th, 1911.

POET FOUND DEAD IN BED IN S. F. CLUB

George Sterling Discovered by Valet in Bohemian Club; Death Apparently Came in Writer's Sleep

Demise Unexpectedly Follows Illness Diagnosed as Mild; Author Noted for Courage and Personality

1926

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 17.—George Sterling, renowned poet, found dead in his quarters at the Bohemian club today, died from swallowing poison, according to Detective Lieutenant Charles Dugleau.

"I don't know whether he killed himself or not," said Dugleau. "All I can say is that there is no question that he took poison, either intentionally or by accident, and that [illegible] authorities

Lute Silenced

GEORGE STERLING, Oakland and San Francisco poet, who was found dead in the Bohemian club today.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/houseoforchidsot00sterrich

THE HOUSE OF ORCHIDS
AND OTHER POEMS

THE HOUSE OF ORCHIDS

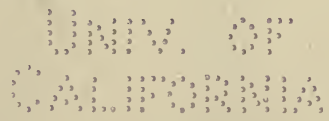
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

GEORGE STERLING

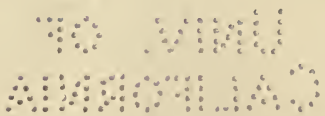
Author of "The Testimony of the Suns"
and "A Wine of Wizardry"

A. M. ROBERTSON
SAN FRANCISCO
1911



COPYRIGHT
1911
BY GEORGE STERLING

Printed by
The Stanley-Taylor Company
San Francisco



TO MY WIFE

435393

CONTENTS

	PAGE
DUANDON	9
ALDEBARAN AT DUSK	22
THE CHARIOTS OF DAWN	23
THE HUNTRESS OF STARS	24
THE EVANESCENT	25
MEMORY	28
THE MOTH OF TIME	29
THE BLACK VULTURE	30
THE HOUSE OF ORCHIDS	31
SONNETS ON THE SEA'S VOICE	40
AUTUMN	44
STARS OF THE NOON	46
THE APOTHECARY'S	48
THE SWIMMERS	51
BENEATH THE REDWOODS	58
MUSIC AT DUSK	60
THE TIDES OF CHANGE	61
MORNING TWILIGHT	62
AN ALTAR OF THE WEST	64
THE FAUN	77
THE VOICES	80
A CHARACTER	81
THE GUERDON OF THE SUN	84

PAGE

THE GARDENS OF THE SEA 86
THE SIBYL OF DREAMS 90
THE MUSIC OF SLEEP 91
DUTY 92
THE ECHO AND THE QUEST 93
JUSTICE 96
THE FLEET 102
REMORSE 105
MOONLIGHT IN THE PINES 107
AT THE GRAVE OF SERRA 111
WHITE MAGIC 114
THREE SONNETS BY THE NIGHT SEA 117
AFTER THE STORM 120
THE HARLOT'S AWAKENING 122
THE MIDGES 124
TO AMBROSE BIERCE 126
TO HALL B. RAND 127
TO VERNON L. KELLOGG 128
CHARLES WARREN STODDARD 129
THE ASHES IN THE SEA 132
THE FORTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF JOB 135

DUANDON

Duandon, king of Aetria's farthest bound
And lord of isles the sea is loud around,
Beheld the crimson fountains of the dawn
Bear up the lark, a foam of song, till drawn
By some new sorrow in the ocean's tone,
Thither he fared, expectant and alone.
Thither he fared, fresh from the sea of sleep,
And all the balmy land was blossomed deep,
Nor could one wander save on helpless flow'rs,
Where Summer made a garland of the hours
And bound it on the dew-dipt brow of Morn,
Bent low above the meadow's blossom-bourn.
But past all peace of bowers rang the call
And invocation of the billows' fall,
And, clean from kingdoms of the sapphire vast,

The winds of ocean smote his brow at last.
Afar he saw the eddying petrel sweep
O'er reefs where hoarser roared the thwarted deep,
And soon before his eyes, exultant, fain,
Heavy with azure gleamed the investing main,
And quick with pulsings of a distant storm,
Strong as that music floating Troy to form.
Splendid the everlasting ocean shone
As God's blue robe upon a desert thrown;
Landward he saw the sea-born breakers fare,
Young as a wind and ancient as the air;
August he saw the unending ranks uproll,
With joy and wonder mastering the soul,
With marvel on the hearing and the sight—
Green fires, and billows tremulous with light,
With shaken soul of light and shuddering blaze
Of leaping emerald and cold chrysoprase,—
The surge and suspiration of the sea,
Great waters choral of eternity,—

DUANDON

The mighty dirge that will not cease for day
Nor all the stars' invincible array,—
The thunder that hath set, since Time began,
Its sorrow in the lonely heart of man.

Long stood the king before that wide review,
Divining, deep beyond its sound and hue,
Unfathomable mystery and dream,—
Rapture and woe illusive but supreme;
And as the pine against the sea-wind sighs,
So thrilled his breast with whispers and surmise;
Till, on a beach that only he might roam,
The sea, from broadest tapestries of foam,
From mighty looms immaculate and cold,
A scarlet shell before his feet uprolled.
Wet as with blood against the dawn it flamed,
Deep-whorled and irised, lustrous and unnamed—
A jewel of the sea that burned and shone
Like some king-ruby ravished from a throne.

And long Duandon wandered, all-amazed,
And long upon the shell's wild beauty gazed,
Till, half-unwitting, swiftly to his ear
He held it, fain as any child to hear
That echo like the murmuring of seas—
Astray forever on a mournful breeze
And borne from some remote, nocturnal bound;
Whereat a voice, in sorceries of sound
To which the grace of vanished lyres had clung,
Sang from the shell as never voice hath sung:

Far down, where virgin silence reigns,
In jasper evenings of the sea,
I toss my pearls, I wait for thee.
The sea hath lent me all its stains:
It is but treasure-house of me.

The corals of the deep have caught
A Titan shell whose fragile dome

DUANDON

Is crimson o'er mine ocean home—
Mine opal chambers subtly wrought
In semblance of the shaken foam.

Oh, come! and thou shalt dream with me
By violet foam at twilight tost
On strands of ocean islets lost
To prows that seek them wearily,
O'er seas by questing sunsets crost.

All dreams that Hope hath promised Love,
All beauty thou hast sought in vain,
All joy held once and lost again,
These, and the mystery thereof,
I guard beneath the sundering main.

So rang that crystal cry, as from afar,
Clear as the voice of Heaven's whitest star,
And strong Duandon pondered, with his gaze

DUANDON

Set like twin stars above those azure ways.
Keener his heart, a plummet, yearned to sound
The gulf that held his soul amazed and bound,
Where, darker for the sky's unclouded dome,
The waves took sudden coronals of foam,
Till half he deemed he saw, far out, the white
Flung arms and bosom of the ocean-sprite.
Hour beyond hour, until the sun was fled,
Strode he on sands that none but he might tread;
Hour beyond hour one sight his vision drank—
A foam-white arm that beckoned once, and sank.
Then, wave to wave in deeper anthems roared,
And realm by realm the belted sunset soared,
As tho' a city of the Titans burned
In lands below the sea-line, undiscerned,
Till desolation touched it, zone by zone,
Its splendors gone, like jewels turned to stone,
And sad with evening sang the ocean-choirs,
Domed by the stars' imperishable fires.

But still Duandon lingered on the sands
And clasped the shell with indecisive hands;
Ghostly it gleamed, nor music would outpour
Save of the sea on some disastrous shore.
And still he stood, and listened but to hark
The surf, like dragons battling in the dark;
Implacable they ravened, ere the moon,
A towering glory on the eastern dune,
A frozen splendor on the seething strand,
In silver webs had snared the sea and land.
Then, as on hostile waves her arrows leapt,
Duandon turned him from the sea, and slept.
Slept, but the morning found him yet again
A lonely searcher of the lonelier main;
And night by night, and day by barren day,
Silent he stood before the waves' array—
The victim of an unrelenting strife
Of joy with death, of love with love of life.
Ever at dawn the voice from out the shell
Renewed within his heart the siren's spell;

Ever the wild, enchanting melody
Rang as the sun was wedded to the sea.
And still the royal pageant of the world
Before his doom-bewildered eyes unfurled,
With dusky stain of sunsets northward drawn
And cloudy headlands of the coasts of dawn.
Beyond that realm of jade and jade-bound bays,
He saw the sapphire fields of ocean blaze;
Heard the alliant waters chant their rune
Before the turquoise battlements of noon,
Where evening armies of the mist would roam
As twilight mixed its purple with the foam,—
Where sunlight, checked in its torrential leap,
Would froth at dawn about some cloudland steep.
Debarred was peace, tho' Sleep, with tender hand,
Led him awhile in her allaying land;
For soon the sea flowed in upon his dream
And far below he saw the Singer gleam—
Her floating hair and pearly body's grace,

With sunken moonlight pure upon her face.
So still he yearned, on whom her spell was laid,
And ever sunset, like a golden blade,
Cut day by day from life, and ever he
Heard like the voice of Death the lordly sea,
Chanting, enthroned on choric reef and bars,
Its midnight song below the western stars,
And all the stars seemed ministrant to doom
As high Orion trod his arc of gloom.

Broke then a morning when the weary sea
Lay husht above its halls of mystery;
Besieging fog hung mute on shore and vale,
With pallid banners and with ashen mail,
And ocean, grey as with oblivion,
Lay hidden from the visage of the sun.
High noon drave not the phantom army forth,
Nor winds slow-seeping from the muffled North,
And weary with its vigil of the deep,

DUANDON

Duandon's soul put out on seas of sleep;
Dreamless he lay ere sunset, and the shell,
Unguarded, from assenting fingers fell.
Came then, nor spilt that anodyne of rest,
His only son, impatient with the quest,
New-fared from crimson victories of war,—
Tall as the spears that lesser champions bore.
To him the horizon was a smitten chord
That rang in challenge to his youthful sword,
And thrilled with all the murmurs of romance
The realms remote from his insatiate lance.
Silent awhile he stood, and ere he spoke,
Routed at last, the sea-mist's army broke,
And, as its ranks fled landward to their knell,
The consummating sunset smote the shell.

Duandon woke below the evening star,
And saw the foam's incessant scimetar
Leap from the billow's sheath, and heard the cry

DUANDON

Of winds unleashed upon the western sky;
Forlorn beyond the darkling waters lay
The sullen embers of the pyre of Day—
Dull, ere obscuring night should make the sea
One with the reaches of infinity;
Then to the sands his gaze returned, to meet
The seaward print of unreturning feet.
Gone was the shell; a sword lay in its stead,
From altars of the buried sun made red—
A blade he knew so well from all the rest
It seemed that instant to transfix his breast.
Afar or near, on waters grey and lone,
No swimmer drave, no arm uplifted shone;
Austere and vacant rolled the cryptic main,
Unsearchable: the prince came not again,
Unseen on tawny beach or waters loud,—
Gone like the shadow of a vanished cloud.

Aye! better vanished, than to wait, as he,

DUANDON

Duandon, silent by the unmastered sea,
From which, till death, his heart was doomed to crave
The uncomprehended tidings of the wave—
An echo of that music from the shell
Forever vibrant in its fall and swell—
Was fated, still, from azure gulfs to dream
He saw the arm of some white swimmer gleam,
Flung for an instant from the shifting spray—
Siren, or son, or both, he could not say.
And feelest *thou* no pangs of beauty lost,
When morning waves or waters sunset-crost
Cry to thy soul, unsatisfied, alone,
Of Isles to which its younger dreams have flown?
The might-have-been, the nevermore-to-be,
Bears not the deep their antiphon to thee?
For man has found, as man shall ever find,
Some echo of his travail on the wind,
And sigh of great Departures, and the breath

Of pinions incontestable by Death.
Of stars and shadows past to-morrow's ken
He finds him vision and announcement, when,
As storms beyond the horizon-line prolong
The sea's imperious, eternal song,
The thunder-chorded surf on yellow sands
Resounds, like harps on which the gods lay hands.

THREE SONNETS OF THE NIGHT SKIES

I

ALDEBARAN AT DUSK

Thou art the star for which all evening waits—
O star of peace, come tenderly and soon!
As for the drowsy and enchanted moon,
She dreams in silver at the eastern gates
Ere yet she brim with light the blue estates
Abandoned by the eagles of the noon.
But shine thou swiftly on the darkling dune
And woodlands where the twilight hesitates.

Above that wide and ruby lake to-West
Wherein the sunset waits reluctantly,
Stir silently the purple wings of Night.
She stands afar, upholding to her breast,
As mighty murmurs reach her from the sea,
Thy lone and everlasting rose of light.

II

THE CHARIOTS OF DAWN

O Night, is this indeed the morning-star,
That now with brandished and impatient beam
On eastern heights of darkness flames supreme,
Or some great captain of the dawn, whose car
Scornful of all thy rear-guard ranks that bar
His battle, now foreruns the helms that gleam
Below horizons of dissevering dream,
Who lifts his javelin to his hosts afar?

Now am I minded of some ocean-king
That in a war of gods has wielded arms,
And still in slumber hears their harness ring
And dreams of isles where golden altars fume,
Till, mad for irretrievable alarms,
He passes down the seas to some strange doom.

III

THE HUNTRESS OF STARS

Tell me, O Night! what horses hale the moon!
Those of the sun rear now on Syria's day,
But here the steeds of Artemis delay
At heavenly rivers hidden from the noon,
Or quench their starry thirst at cisterns hewn
In midnight's deepest sapphire, ere she slay
The Bull, and hide the Pleiades' dismay,
Or drown Orion in a silver swoon.

Are those the stars, and not their furious eyes,
That now before her coming chariot glare?
Is that their nebulous, phantasmal breath
Trailed like a mist upon the winter skies,
Or vapors from a Titan's pyre of death—
Far-wafted on the orbit of Altair?

THE EVANESCENT

The wind upon the mountain-side
 Sang to the dew: "My moments fly:
 In yonder valley I must die.
How long thy restless gems abide!"

Low to the bent and laden grass
 There came the whisper of the dew:
 "My lessening hours, how fleet and few!
What months are thine ere thou shalt pass!"

The grass made murmur to the tree:
 "My days a little time are fair;
 But oh! thy brooding years to share—
The centuries that foster thee!"

THE EVANESCENT

Ere died the wind the tree had said:
"O mountain marvellous and strong,
The aeons of thine age—how long,
When I and all my kin lie dead!"

The mountain spake: "O sea! thy strength
Forevermore I shall not face.
At last I sink to thine embrace;
Thy waves await my ramparts' length."

The deep gave moan: "O stars supreme!
Your eyes shall see me mute in death.
Before your gaze I fade like breath
Of vapors in a mortal's dream."

Then bore the Void a choral cry,
Descendent from the starry throng:
"A little, and our ancient song
Dies at thy throne, Eternity!"

Then, silence on the heavenly Deep,
Wherein that music sank unheard,
As shuts the midnight on a word
Said by a dreamer in his sleep.

MEMORY

She stands beside the ocean of the Past,
A diver. Pearls and hydras can she bring,
Shells for the child and crystals for the king.
Prone on her reefs the sea-essaying mast
And keels that dared the hurricane are cast—
Trophies of tides invincible that swing
Around the islands where the Sirens sing,
The magic of whose song is hers at last.

Some shadow of the glory she restores,
Tho' wave and wind devour the Ships of Dream;
For many mark her ere the fall of night,
When the surf's sound is mighty on her shores,
Singing, as wildly on her bosom gleam
The sea-dews, and the rubies of the light.

THE MOTH OF TIME

Lo! this audacious vision of the dust—
 This dream that it hath dreamt! Unresting
 wings,
 Too strong for Time, too frail for timeless things!
Whence all thy thirst for God, thy piteous lust
For life to be when matter's chain shall rust?
 What pact hast thou with the undying kings,
 Silence and Death? What sibyl's counsellings
Assure thee that the eternal laws are just?

Nay! all thy hopes are nothing to the Night,
 And justice but a figment of thy dream!
 Upon the waste what wide mirages glow,
With hills that shift, and palms that mock the sight,
 And cities on the desert's far extreme—
 Those veils we name, and dare to think we
 know!

THE BLACK VULTURE

Aloof upon the day's immeasured dome,
He holds unshared the silence of the sky.
Far down his bleak, relentless eyes descry
The eagle's empire and the falcon's home—
Far down, the galleons of sunset roam;
His hazards on the sea of morning lie;
Serene, he hears the broken tempest sigh
Where cold sierras gleam like scattered foam.

And least of all he holds the human swarm—
Unwitting now that envious men prepare
To make their dream and its fulfilment one,
When, poised above the caldrons of the storm,
Their hearts, contemptuous of death, shall dare
His roads between the thunder and the sun.

THE HOUSE OF ORCHIDS

Dedicated to Mrs. Joseph B. Coryell

How swift a step from zone to zone!
A moment since, the day
Was cool with winds from linden-bowers flown
And breath of mounded hay
That ripens on the plains,
Beneath the shadow of the western hill;
But here the air is still,
Warm as a Lesbian valley's afternoon
Made langourous with June
And moist with spirits of unnumbered rains,
Pervaded with a perfume that might be
Of rainbow-haunted lands beyond the sea
And ocean-ending sands—
A ghost of fragrance whose elusive hands
Touch not the hidden harp of memory.

What sprites are those that gleam?
Can eyes betray?
Till now I did not deem
That Beauty's flaming hands could shape in bloom
So marvelous and delicate designs.
The vision here that shines
Seems not a fabric of our mortal day
And Nature's tireless loom,
By custom long defiled,
But symbol of a loveliness supreme,
A god's forgotten dream
In alabaster told by elfin skill
In caverns underneath a haunted hill,
Or in some palace of enchantment hewn
From crystal in the twilights of the moon,
Where white Astarte strays
And Echo and the silver-footed fays
Make alien music, fugitive and wild.
Ye seem as flowers exiled,

More beautiful because they die so soon;
But who the gods that could have scorned
 Your tenderness unmarred?
 Put first ye forth your fragile wings,
Less of the form than of the soul of things,
 Where seraphim had mourned
 In Eden's evening, heavy-starred,
 When first the gates were barred
 And cruel Time began?
For mystery hath lordship here, and ye
Seem spirit-flowers born to startle man
With intimations of eternity
And hint of what the flowers of Heaven may be.
Nor can your glamour greatly seem of earth:
 Her blossoms are of mirth,
But ye with loveliness can tell of grief—
Unhappy love most exquisite and brief.

 Wingéd ye seem and fleet,

Such flowers pale as are
Worn by the goddess of a distant star—
Before whose holy eyes
Beauty and evening meet,
Mysterious beauty delicate and strange,
And evening-calm that sighs
With Music's inexpressible surmise—
Her question ere she dies.
From form to form ye range,
From hue to hue,
And this, with petals wan and mystical,
Seems votive to those spirits of the dew
That weep at silvern twilights silently,
With tears that gently fall
On hidden elves dim-curtained by the rose.
And thou, thy chalice better glows
In purple grottos where the stainless sea
On sands inviolable swirls—
On evanescent pearls,

That hold not all thy bosom's purity.

And thou, more white
Than when on some blue lake,
Just as the zephyrs wake,
The ripples flash to light—
Touched by a swan's unsullied breast to foam,
Hadst thou in melancholy halls thy home?
For long ago thou seemest to have slept,
Forlorn, in palace-glooms where queens have wept.
Ah! they too slept at last,
Whose sighs are half the music of the Past!

But thou, O palest one!
Dost seem to scorn the sun,
And, in a tropic, dense,
Languid magnificence,
Desire to know thy former place,
Where no man comes at night,

And in its antic flight
Behold the vampire-bat veer off from thee
As from a phantom face,
Or watch Antares' light peer craftily
Down from the dank and moonless sky,
As goblins' eyes might gleam
Or baleful rubies glare,
Muffled in smoke or incense-laden air.
And thou, most weird companion, thou dost seem
Some mottled moth of Hell,
That stealthily might fly
To hover there above the carnal bell
Of some black lily, still and venomous,
And poise forever thus.

Chill, in thy drowsy aether warm,
Softly thou gleamest, subtler form;
Witch-bloom thou seem'st to be,
For Lilith would have bound thee in her hair—

Smiling at dusk inscrutably,
And Circe gathered such for gods to wear,
In evenings when the moon,
A sorceress who steals in white
Along the cloudy parapets of night,
In every glade her ghostly pearl hath strewn.
Thou art as violet-wan
As eyelids of a vestal dead and meek.
If after-life can come to blossoms gone,
Surely Persephone
Shall crown her brow with thee,
In realms where burns nor star nor sun
To show the dead what amaranths to seek.
And ah—this other! none
Of all thy kin more purely is arrayed—
Pallid as Aphrodite's cheek
To some long passion-swoon betrayed,
By ecstasy foretold;
Yet as with blood thy bosom gleams;

Red as Adonis' wound it seems,
By Syria mourned of old,
Or scarlet lips that drink from bowls of jade,
Slowly, an ivory poison, sweet and cold.

Oh! mystically strange
That speechless things should so have power to hint,
With subtle form and tint
That seize the heart's high memories unaware,
The sorrow and the mystery of Change,
And elements in Fate's controlling plan
Not altogether ministrant to man
Nor mindful of his care—
Some joy to death akin,
Or tragic kiss, or fruit malignly fair,
Some garden built by Sin
For Love to wander in,
Some face whose beauty bids the heart despair!
And yet, O blossoms pure!

How marvelous the lure
Of your fragility and innocence—
This grace and wistfulness of helpless things
That ask no recompense!
Ye give the spirit wings,
For yours the beauty that is near to pain,
And stir the heart again
With visions of the Flowers that abide—
Ah! sweet
As when love's glances meet
Across the music, heard at eventide!

Lloyden, June, 1909.

SONNETS ON THE SEA'S VOICE

I

Thou seem'st to call to that which will not hear,
As man to Fate. Thine anthems uncontrolled,
From winnowed sands and reefs reverberant rolled,
Shake as with sorrow, and the hour is near
Wherein thy voice shall seem a thing of fear,
Like to a lion's at the trembling fold;
And men shall waken to the midnight cold,
And feel that dawn is far, that night is drear.

Thou wert ere Life, a dim but quenchless spark,
Found vesture in thy vastness. Thou shalt be
When Life hath crossed the threshold of the Dark,—
When shackling ice hath zoned at last thy breast,
And thy deep voice is hushed, O vanquished Sea!
One with eternity that giveth rest.

SONNETS ON THE SEA'S VOICE

II

No cloud is on the heavens, and on the sea
No sail: the immortal, solemn ocean lies
Unbroken sapphire to the walling skies—
Immutable, supreme in majesty.
The billows, where the charging foam leaps free,
Burden the winds with thunder. Soul, arise!
For ghostly trumpet-blasts and battle-cries
Across the tumult wake the Past for thee.

They call me to a dim, disastrous land,
Where fallen marbles tell of mighty years,
Heroic architraves, but where the gust
Ripples forsaken waters. Lo! I stand
With armies round about, and in mine ears
The roar of harps reborn from legend's dust.

SONNETS ON THE SEA'S VOICE

III

How very still this odorous, dim space
 Amid the pines! the light is reverent,
 Pausing as one who stands with meek intent
On thresholds of an everlasting place.
A single iris waits in weary grace—
 Her countenance before the dawning bent,
 As Faith might linger, husht and innocent,
With all an altar's glory on her face.

But silence now is hateful: I would be,
 By midnight dark and wild as Satan's soul,
 Where the winds' unreturning charioteers
Lash, with the hurtling scourges of the sea,
 Their frantic steeds to some tempestuous goal—
 The deep's enormous music in their ears.

SONNETS ON THE SEA'S VOICE

IV

O thou unalterable sea! how vast
 Thine utterance! What portent in thy tone,
 As here thy giant choirs, august, alone,
Roll forth their diapason to the blast!—
Great waters hurled and broken and upcast
 In timeless splendour and immeasured moan,
 As tho' Eternity to years unknown
Bore witness of the sorrows of the Past.

Thou callest to a deep within my soul—
 Untraversed and unsounded; at thy voice
 Abysses move with phantoms unbegot.
What paeans haunt me and what pangs control!—
 Thunders wherewith the seraphim rejoice,
 And mighty hunger for I know not what.

AUTUMN

Now droops the troubled year
And now her tiny sunset stains the leaf.
A holy fear,
A rapt, elusive grief,
Make imminent the swift, exalting tear.

The long wind's weary sigh—
Knowest, O listener! for what it wakes?
Adown the sky
What star of Time forsakes
Her pinnacle? What dream and dreamer die?

A presence half-divine
Stands at the threshold, ready to depart
Without a sign.
Now seems the world's deep heart
About to break. What sorrow stirs in mine?

AUTUMN

A mist of twilight rain
Hides now the orange edges of the day.
In vain, in vain
We labor that thou stay,
Beauty who wast, and shalt not be again!

STARS OF THE NOON

Untaught, I meet the question of the hours—
Travail and prayer and call;
But ye, with stillness deeper than the flow'rs',
O stars! can answer all.

Now, tho' the sapphire walls of noon forbid
Your beams compassionate,
Witheld by light, as love by silence hid,
Unchanging ye await,

Till Day, whom all the swords of sunset bar
From Edens daily lost,
Pass, and your lonely armies sink afar
To oceans nightly crost.

Ah! when, ere long, I watch your kingdoms reach
Past the departed sun,
Will ye, in silence holier than speech,
Tell that our ways are one?—

That I, as ye, vanish awhile in day
(The day we reckon night),
Till dusks of birth reveal the backward way
To darkness reckoned light?

Come! for the ancient Altar waits your flame,
The seas of shadow call,
And, exile of a land I cannot name,
Homesick, I question all.

THE APOTHECARY'S

Its red and emerald beacons from the night
Draw human moths in melancholy flight,
With beams whose gaudy glories point the way
To safety or destruction—choose who may!
Crystal and powder, oils or tincture clear,
Such the dim sight of man beholds, but here
Await, indisputable in their pow'r,
Great Presences, abiding each his hour;
And for a little price rash man attains
This council of the perils and the pains—
This parliament of death, and brotherhood
Omniponent for evil and for good.

Venoms of vision, myrrh of splendid swoons,

They wait us past the green and scarlet moons.
Here prisoned rest the tender hands of Peace,
And there an angel at whose bidding cease
The clamors of the tortured sense, the strife
Of nerves confounded in the war of life.
Within this vial pallid Sleep is caught,
In that, the sleep eternal. Here are sought
Such webs as in their agonizing mesh
Draw back from doom the half-reluctant flesh.
There beck the traitor joys to him who buys,
And Death sits panoplied in gorgeous guise.

The dusts of hell, the dews of heavenly sods,
Water of Lethe or the wine of gods,
Purchase who will, but, ere his task begin,
Beware the service that you set the djinn!
Each hath his mercy, each his certain law,
And each his Lord behind the veil of awe;
But ponder well the ministry you crave,

Lest he be final master, you the slave.
Each hath a price, and each a tribute gives
To him who turns from life and him who lives.
If so you win from Pain a swift release,
His face shall haunt you in the house of Peace;
If so from Pain you scorn an anodyne,
Peace shall repay you with a draft divine.
Tho' toil and time be now by them surpast,
Exact the recompense they take at last—
These genii of the vials, wreaking still
Their sorceries on human sense and will.

THE SWIMMERS

We were eight fishers of the western sea,
Who sailed our craft beside a barren land,
Where harsh with pines the herdless mountains stand
And lonely beaches be.

There no man dwells, and ships go seldom past;
Yet sometimes there we lift our keels ashore,
To rest in safety 'mid the broken roar
And mist of surges vast.

One strand we know, remote from all the rest,
For north and south the cliffs are high and steep,
Whose naked leagues of rock repel the deep,
Insurgent from the west.

THE SWIMMERS

Tawny it lies, untrodden e'er by man,
Save when from storm we sought its narrow rift
To beach our craft and light a fire of drift
And sleep till day began.

Along its sands no flower nor bird has home.
Abrupt its breast, girt by no splendor save
The whorled and curving emerald of the wave
And scarves of rustling foam—

A place of solemn beauty; yet we swore,
By all the ocean stars' unhasting flight,
To seek no refuge for another night
Upon that haunted shore.

That year a sombre autumn held the earth.
At dawn we sailed from out our village bay;
We sang; a taut wind leapt along the day;
The sea-birds mocked our mirth.

THE SWIMMERS

Southwest we drave, like arrows to a mark;
Ere set of sun the coast was far to lee,
Where thundered over by the white-hooved sea
The reefs lie gaunt and dark.

But when we would have cast our hooks, the main
Grew wroth a-sudden, and our captains said:
"Seek we a shelter." And the west was red;
God gave his winds the rein.

And eastward lay the sands of which I told;
Thither we fled, and on the narrow beach
Drew up our keels beyond the lessening reach
Of waters green and cold.

Then set the wounded sun. The wind blew clean
The skies. A wincing star came forth at last.
We heard like mighty tollings on the blast
The shock of waves unseen.

THE SWIMMERS

The wide-winged Eagle hovered overhead;
The Scorpion crept slowly in the south
To pits below the horizon; in its mouth
Lay a young moon that bled.

And from our fire the ravished flame swept back,
Like yellow hair of one who flies apace,
Compelled in lands barbarian to race
With lions on her track.

Then from the maelstroms of the surf arose
Wild laughter, mystical, and up the sands
Came Two that walked with intertwining hands
Amid those ocean snows.

Ghostly they shone before the lofty spray—
Fairer than gods and naked as the moon,
The foamy fillets at their ankles strewn
Less marble-white than they.

Laughing they stood, then to our beacon's glare
Drew nearer, as we watched in mad surprise
The scarlet-flashing lips, the sea-green eyes,
The red and tangled hair.

Then spoke the god (goddess and god they seemed),
In harplike accents of a tongue unknown—
About his brows the dripping locks were blown;
Like wannest gold he gleamed.

Staring we sat; again the Vision spoke.
Beyond his form we saw the billows rave,—
The leap of those white leopards in the wave,—
The spume of seas that broke.

Yet sat we mute, for then a human word
Seemed folly's worst. And scorn began to trace
Its presence on the wild, imperious face;
Again the red lips stirred,

But spoke not. In an instant we were free
From that enchantment: fleet as deer they turned
And sudden amber leapt the sands they spurned.
We saw them meet the sea.

We heard the seven-chorded surf, unquelled,
Call in one thunder to the granite walls;
But over all, like broken clarion-calls,
Disdainful laughter welled.

Then silence, save for cloven wave and wind.
Our fire had faltered on its little dune.
Far out a fog-wall reared, and hid the moon.
The night lay vast and blind.

Silent, we waited the assuring morn,
Which rose on angered waters. But we set
Our hooded prows to sea, and, tempest-wet,
Beat up the coast forlorn.

And no man scorned our tale, for well they knew
Had mystery befallen: in our eyes
Were alien terrors and unknown surmise.
Men saw the tale was true.

And no man seeks a refuge on that shore,
Tho tempests gather in impelling skies;
Unseen, unsolved, unhazarded it lies,
Forsaken evermore.

For on those sands immaculate and lone
Perchance They list the sea's immeasured lyre,
When sunset casts an evanescent fire
Thro billows thunder-sown.

BENEATH THE REDWOODS

O trees! so vast, so calm!
Softly ye lay
On heart and mind today
The unpurchaseable balm.

Ere yet the wind can cease,
Your mighty sigh
Is spirit of the sky—
Half sorrow and half peace.

Mourn ye your brothers slain,
That now afar
From hush and dews and star
Man barters for his gain?

Mourn them with all your boughs,
For I must mourn,
In seasons yet unborn,
The cares that they will house.

MUSIC AT DUSK

O Twilight, Twilight! evermore to hear
The wounded viols pleading to thy heart!
To dream we watch thy purple wings depart;
To wake, and know thy presence alway near!

What dost thou on the pathway of the sun?
Abide thy sister Night, while strains so pure
Make heaven and all its beauty seem too sure,
And all too certain her oblivion.

One star awakes to turn thee from the south.
Oh, linger in the shadows thou hast drawn,
Ere Night cast dew before the feet of Dawn,
Or Silence lay her kiss on Music's mouth!

THE TIDES OF CHANGE

Wherewith is Beauty fashioned? Canst thou deem
Her evanescent roses bourgeon save
Within the sunlight tender on her grave?
Awake no winds but bear her dust, a gleam
In morning's prophecy or sunset's dream;
And every cry that ever Sirens gave
From islands mournful with the quiring wave
Was echo of a music once supreme.

All æons, conquests, excellencies, stars,
All pain and peril of seraphic wars,
Were met to shape thy soul's divinity.
Pause, for the breath of gods is on thy face!
The ghost of dawns forgotten and to be
Abides a moment in the twilight's grace.

MORNING TWILIGHT

An early thrush acclaims the light—
 The wide, low-billowing day
O'er dews and grasses chill with night
 Upcasts its foam of grey.

Now end the darkness and its dreams.
 The ashen moon is low;
Like petal-drift on placid streams
 We watch her sink and go.

And like a dryad to her tree
 The morning star hath sped—
Gone ere an eye essayed to see
 The path whereon she fled.

MORNING TWILIGHT

Hark how, as here we stand the wards
 Of woodlands newly green,
The pine's innumerable chords
 Are touched by hands unseen!

Hearing, the forest seems forlorn
 And all the air a sigh
Of things that seek a vaster morn,
 And find it not, and die.

O tranquil hour! the haggard noon
 Shall make a ghost of thee
Soon to be memory's, and soon
 Not even of memory.

AN ALTAR OF THE WEST

(Point Lobos, the southern boundary of Carmel Bay.)

Beauty, what dost thou here?
Why hauntest thou this empery of pain
Where men in vain
Long for another sphere?
Art not an exile shy,
A dreamer 'mid the swords,
Upon this iron world where men defy
Time and its hidden lords?
Thou waitest with a splendor on thy brow.
And seem'st to watch with compensating eyes
Each jest our dwarfing Fates devise;
And after all the strife,

'Tis thou
Who standest where the slayers' feet have trod—
Perchance a portion of this dream of God
That will not go from life.

All that man's yearning finds beyond its reach
Thou hast in promise, giving to his heart
A rapturous sadness all too wild for speech,—
A glory past the thresholds of his art,
Tho Nature tell it with the wind
And beckon him to find.
Thou dost reward our barren years:
Our very tears—
The dews of memory—
Were lovely as the dew, could Grief but see.
What marvel fills
Thine evenings, dawns and noons!—
The dryad-haunted hills
And gold of reeds that wait the lips of Pan;

AN ALTAR OF THE WEST

Silence and silver one in wasting moons;
The stains
Of mornings beautiful ere Time began,
And wine-souled Autumn and the ghostly rains;
A bird
In moonlit valleys of enchantment heard;
The fall of sunsets past the sea,
And shadow of celestial pearls to be
Where meet in day
The night's last star, the morning's youngest ray.

On thine incarnate face could we but look,
Would not we die,
Desiring overmuch?
And yet we sigh,
Who find on land and sea thy radiant touch
And dream thou hast on earth a secret nook—
A glade supremely blest
In woodlands where thou wanderest unseen.

AN ALTAR OF THE WEST

Hath not the snowy North
Or star-concealing ocean of the West
A court wherein thou sittest queen,
A temple whence thou goest forth,
An altar for our quest?
Goddess, one such I know,
And fain would praise,
Tho less the gift my words bestow
Than tapers 'mid the blaze
Of peaceless stars that gather at thy throne.
Yet seems it most thine own.

Past Carmel lies a headland that the deep—
A Titan at his toil —
Has graven with the measured surge and sweep
Of waves that broke ten thousand years ago.
Here winds assoil
That blow
From unfamiliar skies

And isolating waters of the West.
Deep-channelled by the billows' rage it lies,
As tho the land
Thrust forth a vast, tree-shaggy hand
To bar the furious ocean from its breast.
Here Beauty would I seek,
For this I deem her home,
And surely here
The sea-adoring Greek,
Poseidon, unto thee
Thy loftiest temple had been swift to rear,
Of chosen marble and chalcedony,
Pure as the irrecoverable foam.

Ere evening from this granite bulwark gaze,
Above the deeper sapphire that the winds
Drag to and fro.
A zone
Of coldest chrysoprase

Tells where the sunlight finds
The glimmering shoal.
How slow
Yon clouds, like giants overthrown
Sink to the ocean's western verge,
From whence incessant roll
Thro unresponding years
The waves whose anthem challenges the soul—
The everlasting surge
Whose ancient salt is in our blood and tears.
Listen, with sight made blind,
And dream thou hearest on the according wind
The music of the gods again,
The murmur of their slain
And firmamental echo of great wars.
See how the wave in sudden anger flings
White arms about a rock to drag it down!
No siren sings,
But in that pool of crystal gleams her crown,

AN ALTAR OF THE WEST

Flung on a rocky shelf—
Grey jewels cold and agates of the elf
That in yon scarlet cavern still is hid,
'Mid shells that mock the dawn.
Here, where the northern surge is swayed
Upon a beach of amber where a faun
Might clasp the beauty of a Nereid,
Translucent waters cover loops of jade.
Beyond, the sea-scourged walls uphold
A mount of granite, steep and harsh, where cling
Along its rugged length
The cypress legions, melancholy, old.
O'er wasting cliff and strand
In terraced emerald they stand
Against the sky,
Each elder tree a king
Whose fame the wordless billows magnify.
A thousand winters of achieving storm
Moulded each mighty form

To beauty and to strength:
A thousand more shall raven ere they die.

But wander to the verge again
Where the immeasurable main
Below the red horizon rears its wall,
The day's enormous pyre
Whence oft, in mighty sunsets of the West,
The world seems menaced by invading fire.
Dost hear no call
From these hesperian Islands of the Blest
That wait the quest
Of galleys of adventure, launched at dawn
And seaward on the tides of peril drawn?
The sky-line's crimson harbors seem to hold,
At dusk, their prows of gold.
Now, ere the stars come out along the wind,
The veering sea-birds find
The refuge that they crave

AN ALTAR OF THE WEST

On cliffs above the weedy mouth
Of some reverberant cave
In which the ocean's monstrous chuckle wakes.
Fast comes the night;
The west witholds at last
Those last red relics of departing light
That once were noon.
Hark how the billow breaks,
Forever cast
On reefs round which wild waters and the moon
Weave silver garlands — foamy fillets strewn
Along her shining pathway to the South!
The stars arise,
And westward now the Eagle holds their van.
See how the Pleiades,
Like hounds in leash before Aldebaran,
Strain up the shifting skies!
The cypress trees,
Drenched in the milk o' the moon, conspirant seem,

AN ALTAR OF THE WEST

The surf a chant of giants heard afar,
While seaward gleam
The lamps of Lyra and the evening star.

The midnight hushes all;
The winds are dumb;
Eastward, Orion treads the mountain-wall.
But lo! what visitant is on the gloom?
Beauty and mystery and terror meet
At this her chosen seat:
The writhing fog is come,
White as the moon's cold hands
Laid on a marble tomb.
Slow swarm the dragon-bands—
Those pallid monsters of the mist that nose
The granite bare
And glide along the flanks
Of hill and headland where the cypress ranks
Are crouched like silent foes,

Relentless and aware.
Far to the sombre hills they roam
Like winds that have no home,
And creep,
Unhasting and intent,
Along the muffled deep,
As tho malignly sent
From Lethe's murmur and the starless foam.
They pass, and now again the moon is free,
Slow pacing with the Signs about her head;
Soon shall the dawn arise and find her fled
From yon blue battlement,
As tho a pearl were hidden by the sea.

Beauty, what dost thou here?
Why hauntest thou the House where Death is lord
And o'er thy crown appear

The inexorable shadow and the sword?
Art not a mad mirage above a grave?
The foam foredriven of a perished wave?
A clarion afar?
A lily on the waters of despond?
A ray that leaping from our whitest star
Shows but the night beyond?
And yet thou seemest more than all the rest
That eye and ear attest—
A watch-tower on the mountains whence we see
On future skies
The rose of dawn to be;
The altar of an undiscovered shore;
A dim assurance and a proud surmise;
A gleam
Upon the bubble, Time;
The vision, fleet, sublime,
Of sorrowed man, the brute that dared to dream.
Ah! those, and more!

Made veritable tho the heart descry
No path to thy demesne
And Music builds, unseen,
Her Heaven we shall not enter tho we die.
Still must thou speak,
August and consecrate,
Of that Reality we can but seek,
Tho seeking fail—
That Sun eternal and inviolate,
Whereof thou art the portent and the veil.

THE FAUN

Now in the noontide peace I lie
 Where waving grass is green,
With bosom open to the sky
 And not a cloud between;
At dawn, one cast from out the blue
 A shadow on my lanes,
Then vanished with the dwindling dew
 And not a wisp remains.

An hour ago I watched an ant
 Haste homeward with her spoil;
She had, by Jove his covenant,
 No quittance of her toil;
Doubtless they be a thrifty race,
 Whose works shall not depart:
O Jove, who grantest each his place,
 Teach not to me their art!

THE FAUN

I and my kin shall pass ere long,
And ants shall ever be;
But better now the linnet's song
Than their eternity.
What tho my people perish soon?
Awhile the dews we crush
Where nights of summer mould the moon
And laughters wake the thrush.

From yonder hill I spy on man
And marvel at his need,
Who fashions, in a season's span,
A thousand fanes to Greed;
Perchance from each, his worship done,
He ventures forth repaid,
But grant thou me the spendthrift sun
And berries of the glade.

THE FAUN

At noon great Caesar's chariot past,
A poison on the air,
But drive he slow or drive he fast,
The journey's end is Care—
Care, at whose throne all mortals stand
With tinsel crowns put by,
Too weak to rove the billowed land,
Too sad to watch the sky.

Mid ivied trunks I see her gleam,
The nymph, my forest-mate;
She wanders by the lyric stream,
To us articulate.
A golden house let Caesar build,
To hold his ghosts and gods—
For me the summer eves are stilled,
For me the flower nods.

THE VOICES

Last night the granite headland loomed
A Titan on the night,
About whose knees the billows boomed,
Enormous, baffled, white.

And now to morning's throne of gold
Murmurs the chastened sea:
Its thunder and its whispers hold
The selfsame mystery.

A CHARACTER

Blunt as a child, since child he was at heart,
And sun-sincere, my friend to many seemed
Dull, rude, aggressive, tactless. Add to all
His bulk and hairiness and stormy laugh,
And one can find them some excuse for that.
'Twas seeming only. We, who found his soul
Thro friendship's crystal, saw beyond the glass
The elusive seraph. In his mind were met
The faun, the cynic, the philosopher,
But first of all, the poet. Give to such
Apollo's guise, and matters were not well.
Too glad to pose, ofttimes he held his peace
Before the jest that sought his heart; but let
The whim appeal, and all his mind took fire—
The shifted diamond's instant shock of light.

A CHARACTER

Beauty to him (as wine's ecstatic draught,
Richer than blood, and every drop a dream)
Was like a wind some hidden world put forth
To baffle, madden, lure — at times, betray,
Then win him back to worship with a breath
Of Edens never trodden. Yet he stood
No dupe to Nature in her harlotry,
Her guile, her blind injustice and the abrupt
Ferocities of chance, but swift to face
The unkempt fact, and swift no less to snatch
Its honey from illusion's stinging hive—
No moth that beat upon Time's enginery.
Yet loved he Nature well, as one might love
A half-tamed leopardess, for beauty's grace
Alone. Within his enigmatic soul
Sorrow and Art made Love their servitor,
For he would have no master but himself.
To what best liken him? Some singer must
Have used the star-souled geode's rind and heart,

A CHARACTER

Telling of such as he. Let me compare
His rugged aspect and auroral mind
To that wide shell our western ocean grants—
Without, all harsh and hueless, with, perhaps,
A group of barnacles or tattered weed;
Within, such splendor as would make one guess
That once a score of dawnings and a troop
Of royal sunsets had condensed their pomp
To rainbow lacquer which the ocean pow'rs
Had lavished, godlike, on the gorgeous bowl.

THE GUERDON OF THE SUN

Of all the fonts from which man's heart has drawn
 Some essence of the majesty of earth,
 Some intimation of the human worth,
I reckon first the sunset and the dawn.

For those were fires whose splendor smote his clay
 With witness of a light beyond the clod;
 Enshrined, he made of radiance a god,
And found his benediction in the day.

And all his eager hands have found to do,
 And all his tireless hope and love unite,
 In some wise take their symbol from the light,
Our very Heaven based on heaven's blue.

THE GUERDON OF THE SUN

Tilth beyond tilth, he waits upon the sun,
The first to goad, the last to calm his breast,
With dawns that like a clarion break his rest,
And after-glows that crown his labor done.

THE GARDENS OF THE SEA

Beneath the ocean's sapphire lid
 We gazed far down, and who had dreamed,
 Till pure and cold its treasures gleamed,
What lucent jewels there lay hid?—

Opal and jacinth, orb and shell,
 Calice and filament of jade,
 And fonts of malachite inlaid
With lotus and with asphodel,—

Red sparks that give the dolphin pause,
 Lamps of the ocean-elf, and gems
 Long lost from crystal diadems,
And veiled in shrouds of glowing gauze.

THE GARDENS OF THE SEA

Below, the sifted sunlight passed
To twilight, where the azure blaze
Of scentless flowers from the haze
About their dim pavilions cast

Betrayed what seemed forgotten pearls,
As shimmering weeds alert with light
Enticed the half-reluctant sight
To caverns where the sea-kelp swirls.

Splendid and chill those gardens shone,
Where sound is not, and tides are winds,—
Where, fugitive, the naiad finds
Eternal autumn, hushed and lone;

Till one had said that in her bow'rs
Were mixt the nacres of the dawn,
That thence the sunset's dyes were drawn,
And there the rainbow sank its tow'rs.

THE GARDENS OF THE SEA

Where gorgeous flowers of chrysoprase
 In songless meadows bared their blooms,
 The deep's unweariable looms
With shifting splendors lured the gaze.

And zoned on iridescent sands,
 Pellucid glories came and went—
 Silver and scarlet madly blent
In living stars and blazoned bands.

Hydras of emerald and blue
 Were part of swaying tapestries
 Whose woof from ivies of the seas
Stole each inquietude of hue.

And in those royal halls lay lost
 The oriflammes and golden oars
 Of argosies from lyric shores—
'Mid glimmering crowns and croziers tost.

And purple poppies vespertine
 Glowed on the weird and sunken ledge,
 Beyond whose rich, vermillion edge
Rose tentacles from shapes unseen—

Undulant bronze and glossy toils
 That shuddered in the lustrous tide
 And forms in restless crimson dyed
That caught the light in stealthy coils

Far down we gazed, nor dared to dream
 What final sorceries would be
 When in those gardens of the sea
The lilies of the moon should gleam.

THE SIBYL OF DREAMS

The rose she gathers is invisible,
 But ah! its fragrance on the visioned air—
 The scent of Paphian flowers warm and fair;
The breath of blossoms delicate and chill,
By Dian tended on her vestal hill,
 And soul of that wan orchid of despair
 Found by Persephone, when, unaware,
She bent to pluck, and hell and heaven grew still.

Oh! in what lily's deep and splendid cup
 Shall ever evening dryads hope to find
 So marvellous a nectar of delight—
In valleys of enchantment gathered up
 By hesitating spirits of the wind,
 And borne in rapture to the lips of Night?

THE MUSIC OF SLEEP

What crown of dews and opals Morning wore
I knew not, taken in the toils of Sleep;
For mine it was the ways profound to keep
Where seas of dream break on a phantom shore
To mysteries of music evermore.
There shone no star on headland nor on steep,
And past the vague horizon of that deep
On isles unknown I heard its billows roar.

Eastward the everlasting fountains welled
Till o'er my rest the dayspring's golden tide
On hills that are and nearer seas was whirled;
But sealed within my haunted brows I held
The forms that pass, the shadows that abide,
And music of the soul's dim under-world.

DUTY

White on its road we saw her chariot shine,
And she, unturning, passed with lifted gaze,
As Pleasure stood in arrogant amaze
And looked in question on his scornéd wine;
Love from her steeds leapt back with frightened eyne,
Indignant, splendid, and the hostile blaze
Of Pain's effulgence from his hidden ways
Seemed but her beacon to a goal divine.

Then fell intensest shadow on her path,
Whereat one cried, "Behold! the sword of Death!
Shall mortal face unfaltering the Wrath?"
And silence held our multitude. But she
Passed on as to a thing of spectral breath,—
A fantasy that was not nor could be.

THE ECHO AND THE QUEST

Now, as the west is red, O birds!
 My clumsy arts you bring to naught:
 A victim of the curse of thought,
I tell its pain in trammeling words—

Your music mocks the bitter lay!
 Idle as any song of mine
 The melody from copse or pine—
Born at the dying of the day;

But oh! the full accomplishment!
 Reproach unplanned but exquisite!
 Hark how the unpurchased throats transmit
The tidings of a world content!

To you the tale is all of joy,
 But we from rapture ask its pang;
 And tho' an angel came and sang,
Our hearts would worship—and destroy.

And tho for ecstasy you sing,
 Our dim dissent awaits your tale,
 And in the song there seems to wail
Another message than you bring:

Unmastered still by disbelief,
 You tell our doubts in twilight strain;
 Untouched by man's perennial pain,
You give some echo of his grief;

Or so we dream. The very wind
 Serves at the soul's aeolian chords;
 Rulers dismayed, uncertain lords,
In all we find, ourselves we find.

But you escape the nets of care.
Whither at last my feet shall go
I know not: from your song I know
You find the truth, and find it fair.

JUSTICE

Nila the youth, first-born, whose father's name
Was honored in his market-place of Ind,
Loved Unda, and the dreaming twain, betrothed,
Waited the springtide and their marriage-rites.
The springtide came, but Nila's joy came not,
For she, the girl that was to be his bride,
Was ravished from her lover, kin and home—
Prey to the bull-necked Rajah on the hill.
Then Nila, heedless of his father's hope,
Vanished. Anon before the palace gate
That looked across the palm-tops to the south,
And whence the road ran eastward to the town,
There sat one cowled, a grey and mournful shape,
Who spoke not, and was deemed, for silence, saint,—
Who lived upon the offerings of the poor,

And gave no sign, nor vision of his face,
To slave nor councillor. "For," said the youth,
"It well may be that on some day she fare
Forth to the temple, or to other ends:
And I, shall I not know her as she goes,
Tho' jewelled curtains hide the loyal face?
Aye! but to be as near to her as now
And do her service once in all my days
Were better than despair. Yet if men find
That I am Nila, they may well discern
Wherefore I wait, and so the Rajah know,
Or, at the least, my kindred draw me hence."

He waiting, season after season came
With weal and woe unto the sons of men—
The time of sowing and the time to reap,
Summer, and crashing of the winter rain,
And plague and famine, gods that slew unseen.
He heard the stars plot evil unto man,

And saw the baleful meteor float to light
And many suns look down upon man's pain.
The days had each their will of him. The years
Wrought as with cunning chisels. Gaunt he grew,
A silent watcher by the carven gate,
And saw his kind go in and forth again,
But never one whose coming, with a thrill,
Sang to his heart: "Lo! I am even she!"
Hooded, unknown, so sat he 'mid the crows—
Sear as the summer, grey as any rain—
And watched the flowers' birth and death, and heard
The sparrows' song of mating, or the din
Where the shrill apes held council in the grove.
Often, in dreams that broke his daytime's dream,
He somehow, somewhere, found the long-betrothed,
Far-wandered too in sleep's Elysium,
And clasped her form, and kissed her deathless lips,
Hushed, in some garden of eternal dews;

Then woke to silence and the dark, save where
In one lean tower gleamed a shrouded lamp,
Like some red planet still among the stars,
Or, hung above the temple to the south,
The failing lanthorn of the moon . . . Far off
A jackal barked . . . A whisper touched the wind.

So for two score of years his vigil ran,
Unbroken save for slumber, till his hope,
More faint at last, for all his hungering,
Than shadows cast by firstling moons, was fled.
But in the dust and detriments of noon,
And in the midnight, still he longed for her,
As, day by day, the marring seasons passed,
Heedless of his despair. And yet he dreamt,
Sustained by that which man must find at last—
Patience, his answer to the sneer of Hell.
Often he whispered prayer, and, in his age,
Spoke unto children and to ancient men,

But craved no word of her he loved, in dread
Lest he be told her death. Then broke a day
Whereon a hush seemed come to mortal things.
A scarlet flower opened, near at hand,
Scentless. Far up, he saw a lonely cloud,
Cold-purple, like a bruise upon the sky.
A restless wind plucked at the parent dust,
And all the apes were silent in the grove.
And Nila knew his end was near, and felt
His soul rise wearily and welcome Death.
Then one came forth from out the palace gate—
Broken and desolate with foul-eyed age,
And sat near by, nor held at all her peace,
Lamenting o'er some matter of a hen.
Whereat said Nila: "Woman, hast thou word
Of one whom, long ago, the Rajah tore
From lover and from kin—of her whose name
Was Unda?" Then the crone bent low her head
And pondered, reaching back to years agone,

As one that in the darkness of the sea
Gropes for a sunken gem. At last she spoke,
Saying, "So long! So long ago! And yet
Do I remember Unda, for alone
Of all her band she mourned, nor would be still;
Wherefore our lord at last was wroth with her
And put her forth, for that she ever wept,
By the northern gate, forbidding that she turn
Again unto her kindred. And some say
That she within the jungle perished, some
That to a city of the west she fared
And dwelt in shame. Doubtless she long is dead."
And Nila gazed upon the land and sky,
Woven for man's illusion, and beheld
The scarlet petals fallen from their stem.
The cloud had gone; the wind was fled away.
And Nila turned him from the veils of Time,
And bowed his head, and murmured: "God is
just."

THE FLEET

Stand fast! Though steel on clanging steel
Make the contending turret reel;
 Though stern as Hell the battle-blast,
 From merciless horizons cast—
Annihilation's breath—
Thunder no word but "Death!"
 Yea! though the blind sea rave
 And all its gulfs gape eager as the grave,
Sure of your flesh at last,
O human hearts! stand fast!
 And though untested nerve and sinew shrink,
 Trapped and astounded at the final brink—
Tho' hostile guns the march to silence toll,
Beyond it lies the goal,
And past the moment's tremor smiles the soul.

THE FLEET

O brother hearts and brave,
We know you strong to save,
And strong to serve the Star
That past the dusk of war
Imperishable gleams.
And O! how little seems
The price of death men wait so glad to pay
To hold undesecrated every ray!
To serve thro' many nights
The youngest of the Lights
Until it burns sublime
From uncontested heights—
The whitest beacon on the coasts of Time!

Behold her, our dear country, where she stands
Beneath the unconquered skies,
The sword and trumpet in her sheathéd hands,
But mercy in her eyes!
Behold before her gates

That bar the loyal sea,
Foaming upon her threshholds ceaselessly,
Each messenger that waits
Armed for conclusive fates—
Angels of death made mighty to fulfil
'Mid thunderings her will!
Behold all these and know her wisdom's length,
Her beauty and her strength,
And know that farther skies
Age-hence shall see her rise,
Hesperus of the high and starry plan
When nations sit unarmored at the feast,
Of freedom, West and East,
Leagued in the deathless faith of men with Man.

REMORSE

At the sea's verge, near Cypress Point, in Monterey County, the rain, wind, sun and sea have shaped a crag of the Santa Lucian granite into the form of a cowled or crowned figure, bent above the surf.

Prelate or king (the twilight tells not which),
Thou crouchest, silent, by the bitter sea.
Immovable, immortal and alone,
Abidest thou, and in thy stony ears
The changeless moaning of the ancient deep
Is less than prayer to Fate. The flaming noon
Warms, and the spectral mists of evening chill:
Thou heedest not, lapt in granitic dreams,
Nor hast a glance for setting moon or star.
What was thy crime? How long thy bleak
remorse?
For never venial sin had strength to bind
In trance so grim despair so terrible.

REMORSE

Gaze! but the stainless wave shall not assoil!
Listen! but ever in thy soul must ring
The ghostly death-cry of a Cause betrayed,—
An empire lost, a people cast to doom!
So might the Spirit of our tragic orb
Behold, aghast with years, its fell result,
And, blinded with the vision he had wrought,
And dumb with clamors frozen at his heart,
Ponder, unpitied by Eternity,
Above the rising sea of human tears.

MOONLIGHT IN THE PINES

Full-starred, seraphic Night arose,
 Lifting the Pleiades' dim lyre
Above that solitude where glows
 Rose-red Aldebaran's fire.

Mute, ere the darkness could forget
 The crystal hour of evening's trance,
I felt the little winds that set
 The mirrored stars a-dance.

On restless leaves I heard them pass
 To touch the yellow vines that lay
Like paler pythons in the grass,
 Beside a lonely way.

MOONLIGHT IN THE PINES

To forest glades at last it led,
 By Silence chosen as her own:
The pines' soft sighing overhead
 Seemed but her whispers flown.

Scarcely it seemed to cross the bound
 Where she, aloof, stood sorceress—
That twilight where the feet of sound
 Pass unto nothingness.

A little weary of the speech
 Of burdened man and troubled sea,
I stood and dreamed that time would teach
 Her dream of peace to me,

And, awed by the communing night,
 Forgot the haggard world withdrawn,
Ere on my face there fell a light
 As of a spectral dawn.

MOONLIGHT IN THE PINES

It gleamed beyond the barring pine—
That shattered silver of the moon—
The midnight's asphodels divine
On field and woodland strewn.

Among the lesser trees it lay
Like veiled and pallid ghosts that slept,
About whose forms, as in dismay,
The fearful shadows crept.

But o'er the dale where Silence stood,
With tranquil dews austerely crowned,
A wilder glory touched the wood,—
A sense of things profound.

And subtlier on the enchanted air
The moonlight's nacre seemed to melt,
While mosses like a witch's hair
Stirred to a wind unfelt.

And, like a messenger of night,
Mystical, ominous and slow,
A fragile moth, in purposed flight,
Went past on wings of snow.

It may have been that elder pow'rs
Stood, immaterial, in the glade;
Perchance the moon's phantasmal flow'rs
At shrines unseen were laid.

For in those isles it seemed there shone
Forsaken marbles, pure and cold—
The gleam of altars overthrown
And ghostly fanes of old.

And since that hour the night can thrill
With haunting chords by day unstirred,
And Beauty's lips, refusing still,
Move with a secret word.

AT THE GRAVE OF SERRA

'Tis midnight, and the Eagle seeks the sea,
Which, near at hand, eternally intones
Its woe immeasurable. Thro the pane
Of yonder casement giving on the south,
The moonlight holds a chill and gleaming shaft
Above the grave where Serra sleeps. O heart!
Flaming, audacious heart, so long in dust!
'Twas thy reward to die ere died thy works,
To perish, ere the Vision too was fled.
The vineyard and the orchard and the fold
Have passed, and passed as well that other Flock
Thy tenderest concern, O spirit pure!
Who, in an age of infamy and gold
Saw souls alone. The timbers of thy fane

AT THE GRAVE OF SERRA

Have men at last renewed; but where are they,
The humble, dusky thousands of thy care?
One mould with thee! About thy place of sleep
The futile, peering pleasure-seekers come,
Glance, and forget. Thy kin in Christ draw near,
Little in numbers now, and less in faith;
For where the faith that grasped thee like a hand
And led thee on to peril and to pain?
The lamp burns low. They ask for them a sign.

Thou Power unseen whose hands implacable
Close in despair what man begins in hope,—
Unto what end, O Fate! unto what end
Dost thou hale forth on quests irradiant
Thy nobler sons? Is duty but a jest,
Seeing its guerdon given? In thy sight
Is Goodness even as Evil? Shall she find
Her wages also death? Wilt thou deride
Our ancient search for justice in thy ways?

AT THE GRAVE OF SERRA

With bitter viands evermore appease
Our hunger and our thirst for righteousness?
Dost fashion beauty for a moth's desire,
And sow thee life to garner thee but dust?

The soundless grave is not more still than Thou,
The moon less husht in heaven . . . About my feet
The shadows change . . . I hear the unchanging
sea.

WHITE MAGIC

Keep ye her brow with starshine crost
 And bind with ghostly light her hair,
O powers benign, lest I accost
 Song's peaceless angel unaware!

One eve her whisper came to earth,
 As eastward woke a thorny star,
To tell me of her kingdom's worth
 And what her liberations are:

She hath the Edens in her gift
 And songs of sovereignties unborn;
In realms agone her turrets lift,
 Wrought from the purples of the morn.

Where swings to foam the dusky sea,
 She waits with sapphires in her hand
Whose light shall make thy spirit be
 Lost in a still, enchanted land.

Musing, she hears the subtle tunes
 From chords where faery fingers stray—
A rain of pearl from crumbling moons
 Less clear and delicate than they.

The strain we lost and could not find
 Think we her haunted heart forgets?
She weaves it with a troubled wind
 And twilight music that regrets.

Often she stands, unseen, aloof,
 To watch beside an ocean's brink
The gorgeous, evanescent woof
 Cast from the loom of suns that sink.

Often, in eyries of the West,
 She waits a lover from afar—
Frailties of blossom on her breast
 And o'er her brow the evening star.

She stands to greet him unaware,
 Who cannot find her if he seek:
A sigh, a scent of heavenly hair—
 And oh, her breath is on his cheek!

THREE SONNETS BY THE NIGHT SEA

I

Surely the dome of unremembered nights
 Was heavy with those stars! The peaceless sea,
 Casting in foam their fallen shafts to me
Makes ancient music to their awful heights.
O quenchless and insuperable lights!
 What life shall meet your gaze and thence go free
 From litten midnights of eternity
To havens open to your final flights?

Abides nor goal nor ultimate of peace,
 Nor lifts a beacon on the cosmic deep
 To guide our wandering world on seas sublime,
Nor any night to grant the soul release,
 Swung as a pendulum from life to sleep,
 From sleep to life, from Timelessness to Time.

II

Now, as I hear upon the caverned night
The ocean's ceaseless and stupendous dirge,
And one by one the stars approach its verge,
The deep seems all one prayer, and the light
Of farthest suns but questions for the sight
Of men who yet may test the Dark, to urge
Life's portent from the starlight and the surge,
And read the ancient Mystery aright.

Do blinded powers from their darkness seek,
Thro human sight, that secret to attain?
From fonts how distant is the spirit fed?
And who are we? And is it we who speak
The Why we utter to the night of pain,
The Whither to the unresponding dead?

III

Thou seemest inexhaustible, O sea!
And infinite of nature; yet I know
That by divine permission could we go
Within thy sealed and silent deeps, and be
Of all thy glooms and treasuries made free,
The soul at last each marvel would outgrow,
Till each were vain as festal fires that glow
Beneath the stars' immortal scrutiny.

And were all alien worlds and suns laid bare
Till Mystery their secret should declare,
The finite soon its utmost would impart,
And sun nor world at last have power to thrill
Man's wayward and insatiable heart,
Which God and all His truth alone can fill.

AFTER THE STORM

O turquoise morn!
Had earth a sorrow?
The happy larks, sing they
To-day or yesterday,
Or some enchanted morrow
And winds unborn?

To slopes of green,
Only the brook can tell—
In low, elusive tones
On smooth and fluting stones—
Where flow the rains that fell
By night, unseen.

Ghost-moon, what way
Wouldst thou be riding?

AFTER THE STORM

On day's blue diamond
Thou art a flaw! Beyond,
I know, the stars are hiding,
Ere dusk betray.

I would not see;
For now the day is new,
And now a yellow flow'r
Suffices to the hour—
That, and a star of dew
It hoards for me.

THE HARLOT'S WAKENING

Ere dawn a spirit took my hand,
And once again, a joyous child,
I roamed an unforgotten land
Of orchards fresh and mild.

How fair the apple-blossoms were!
How cool the long-delaying breeze!
Where, half-asleep, I heard the stir
And hum of happy bees.

Clear in the meadow ran the brook,
From pool to pool, in liquid grace,
A glass o'er which I bent to look
At my enmirrored face—

THE HARLOT'S WAKENING

A girlish face, with placid brow
 All-innocent of care and hate,—
With eyes I cannot fathom now
 And lips undesecrate.

My sister's laugh, my brother's call—
 So would the morning larks rejoice!
But nearer, dearer far than all,
 I heard my mother's voice.

Her voice? Or did a music break
 Across the street's harsh sea
Whose thunder deepens? Christ! I wake
 To miserable me!

THE MIDGES

Alcon, the wood-god, wandering his realm,
Found his son Astries in the meadowland
At sunset, squatted on a fallen pine
And much intent upon a swarm of gnats.
To whom the godling: "Father, I have stayed
This hour to wonder at yon tiny folk,
Who dart, and hum, and make so much a-do,
Mad with the sunlight. What it is they seek
And whom they praise, and why, I do not know;
But as the hour grows old, and twilight hills
Put on the purple, this I see—that they
With wilder zeal do dash this way and that,
And where each in a foot of space had range,
Now flits he two, and shriller grows the cry,

Larger the host, and greater its concern.
Dost note?" Whereat brown Alcon plucked a root
And beat it on the pine, and briefly spake:
"Aye! aye! they call it 'progress'!" And the sun
Sank on the forest, and the night was chill.

TO AMBROSE BIERCE

I saw a statue in the market-place—
The guerdon of a life of noble toil.
Austerely shone the marble that should foil
Oblivion, tho' the desecrated base,
Round which the sullen huckster trod, bore trace
Of dogs' defilement—transitory moil
That expiating rains would soon assoil;
But oh, the sunlight on that tranquil face!

What to the Titan were the mindless deed,
Mire-born, and swiftly with the mire made one?
No more than could the marble couldst thou heed
The mongrel, and the hate of souls uncouth—
Thou eagle who hast gazed upon the sun
And canst endure the light which is the truth!

TO HALL B. RAND

Happy the man whose age attains
 Repute and rank among the best!
Whose soul no breath of rumor stains
 Nor hath remorse for daily guest.

On him the years as laurels sit,
 For Duty at his side hath stood;
Thro him the grateful gods permit
 A living witness unto good.

Him shall the love of men surround,
 And wisdom shield from darker cares,
Who virtue to the end hath found
 And honor whiter than his hairs.

TO VERNON L. KELLOGG

'Tis well, that man is slow to cry "Alas!"—
That Nature's heart seems eager to atone
For music often ending in a moan
By silence tender with the peace it has;
But ever, as on morning ways I pass,
I see the fields with hints of terror sown—
A tuft of fur, or small and bleaching bone,
Or heap of little feathers in the grass.

How fares it with the lesser wards of life?—
Always they seem so restless, so alert.
Is fear to them an unrelenting care—
The spirit of that dumb and ravenous strife
No Power will justify and none avert?
And in the deep—'tis well we see not there!

CHARLES WARREN STODDARD

O Muse! within thy western hall,
To mellow chord and crystal string,
At many harps thy chosen sing:
His was the gentlest soul of all.

He sang not as the leaping faun
By voiceless rivers cool and clear,
Nor yet as chants the visioned seer
When darkness trembles with the dawn.

A milder music held his lyre—
A wistful strain, all human-sweet,
Between the ashes at our feet
And stars that pass in alien fire.

His skies were sombre, but he lit
 His garden with a lamp of gold,
 Where tropic laughters left untold
The sadness buried in his wit.

Lonely, he harbored to the last
 A boyish spirit, large and droll;
 Tardy of flesh and swift of soul,
He walked with angels of the Past.

With tears his laurels still are wet;
 But now we smile, whose hearts have known
 The fault that harmed himself alone,—
The art that left a world in debt.

Of all he said, I best recall:
 "He knows the sky who knows the sod,
 And he who loves a flower, loves God."
Sky, flower and sod, he loved them all.

From all he wrote (not for his day),
A sense of marvel drifts to me—
Of morning on a purple sea,
And fragrant islands far away.

THE ASHES IN THE SEA

N. M. F.

Whither, with blue and pleading eyes,—
 Whither, with cheeks that held the light
Of winter's dawn on cloudless skies,
 Evadne, was thy flight?

Such as a sister's was thy brow;
 Thy hair seemed fallen from the moon—
Part of its radiance, as now
 Of shifting tide and dune.

Did Autumn's grieving lure thee hence,
 Or silence ultimate beguile?
Ever our things of consequence
 Awakened but thy smile.

Is it with thee that ocean takes
A stranger sorrow to its tone?
With thee the star of evening wakes
More beautiful, more lone?

For wave and hill and sky betray
A subtle tinge and touch of thee;
Thy shadow lingers in the day,
Thy voice in winds to be.

Beauty—hast thou discovered her
By deeper seas no moons control?
What stars have magic now to stir
Thy swift and wilful soul?

Or may thy heart no more forget
The grievous world that once was home,
That here, where love awaits thee yet,
Thou seemest yet to roam?

For most, far-wandering, I guess
 Thy witchery on the haunted mind,
In valleys of thy loneliness,
 Made clean with ocean's wind.

And most thy presence here seems told,
 A waif of elemental deeps,
When, at its vigils unconsoled,
 Some night of winter weeps.

THE FORTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF JOB

1. Moreover, the Lord made question of Job, and asked,
2. To what end dost thou search Me, seeing that My wisdom is not as thine?
3. Shalt thou question My ways, or have dreams concerning My justice? Am not I the Lord?
4. Who hath strange laughter, Whose judgments are not as those of the elders;
5. Who leadeth the lamb from the den of the she-wolf, and armies to the quicksand;
6. Who slayeth the prince in his youth, and rulers at their marriage-feast, but maketh the slave to grow old in his bondage;
7. Whose rains go forth on bitter waters, tho the land thirsteth; Who delivereth thee from the javelin thou beholdest not;
8. Who maketh the king in his secret place and him

that the vultures did devour to sleep the same sleep;

9. Who confoundeth the sea, but leadeth the ant to her desire.
10. Have not I sharpened the beak of the kite against the day of thy hope; the raven's beak against the eyes of thy young men?
11. I shall bar thee from thy joy with a thread of gossamer; I shall bind thy sin to thy children's children with ropes of adamant.
12. The rock is a bolt for My treasure-house. Thou knockest in vain upon the doors thereof.
13. Who art thou that eternity should hold parley with thee, or the pits of the sky be thy fortress?
14. Thou abidest in My sight as the smoke of a sacrifice, or as the grey moth in the conspection of the stars.
15. What hast thou if thou hast not Me? Thou takest to thee strange wine, and the kiss of the asp that it comfort thee.

16. Awake, let it be always day with thee! Know that I am the Lord,
17. Who ordaineth His truth as the mountains, and the dust as stars that conceive;
18. Who teacheth fear with an arrow, and bitter wisdom to thy young men of war;
19. Who boundeth pain by peace, and setteth a term unto love;
20. Who hath no truce with the day, and slayeth the dark with the sword of mighty mornings;
21. Who buildeth the house of life with colored beams, and the house of death without a door;
22. Who hath set harps in hell, and given pure gold for the winding sheet of kings;
23. By Whose breath are the Signs shaken; as a swarm of gnats are they troubled by the wind of His passing;
24. Who yoketh stars to His harrow, and the whirlwind to drag his plough on great waters.

25. Take counsel of Me; behold what shapes I have set as My servants.
26. The sun is a coal of My hearth, the moon an ember that I have quenched;
27. Shall not I make her a desolation, and a rock where devils worship?
28. Shall not My gulfs conceive, and Mine angels whet their scythes against the day of My reaping?
29. Be thou abased, for they are yet unborn that shall lay thee out; the worm is unhatched that shall consume thee.
30. Wilt thou hold forth to Me thy heart in thy hand; or turn for Me its leaves that thou hast writ?
31. Thy wisdom profiteth thee nothing, neither the guards within thy citadels.
32. Shall I consider for long the mighty, or the habitations of the strong?

33. Behold! blood shall be in their courts for wine, and the moaning of their concubines for the voice of the viol.
34. I shall break their temples as a shard; their high pillars shall be snapt as a bow-string.
35. My tempests shall neigh in the walled cities; My grass shall lift up her sword against them;
36. The toad shall be judge there; the jackal shall collect the tax;
37. The owl shall feed her young on their altars; the dung of lions shall be thereon for a testimony.
38. Wert thou upon the flint when I confirmed it, or upon the granite when I laid its sheets?
39. The thunder, was it thou that didst call? Was the rain the tears of thy bringing-forth?
40. Be thou bowed down, nor question the pains that I have set over thee: for each thing have I ordained its shadow.
41. My thoughts are from eternity; I change not

by reason of thy dismay. Thou shalt know Me for the Lord.

42. Who setteth Capella and Achernar to be gods for a term, and a guide upon the deep to strange peoples;

43. Who maketh Altair and Rigel the captains of His host; Who leaneth His spear upon Sirius ere the trumpets call;

44. Who holdeth Vega His armor-bearer, and hangeth his buckler upon Aldebaran;

45. Who hath convoked their chariots against the lamps of Evil, and their swords against the abyss.

46. Who healeth the day with night, and thy heart's wound with the hands of little children;

47. Even they that seek the breast in darkness, hushing the voices that were aforetime.

48. The wind cometh, the dust is troubled for a season, but hath rest when the wind departeth.

Z239
.2
S789
1911a